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# Fields of Post-Abolition: Labor and 'black' experience among coffee workers in Rio de Janeiro (1931-1964)<sup>1</sup>

*Campos do pós-abolição: identidades laborais e experiência "negra" entre os trabalhadores do café no Rio de Janeiro (1931-1964)*

André Cicalo\*

## RESUMO

Este artigo explora se e como sinais de uma experiência afro-brasileira vieram à tona durante a existência do SCEC, um sindicato de carregadores e ensacadores de café que prosperou no porto do Rio de Janeiro entre 1931 e 1964. Apesar da forte presença de trabalhadores afrodescendentes no SCEC, o legado negro estava em grande parte ausente do discurso oficial do sindicato, que, em vez disso, colocava a ênfase na classe, no nacionalismo e em outros valores não relacionados à cor. Esse fato não está completamente desconectado do contexto sociopolítico do Brasil naquela época, dominado pelo sistema do trabalhismo e pela ideologia da democracia racial. No entanto, saliento que marcadores de um "campo negro" não eram completamente estranhos ao SCEC. Eles ainda sobrevivem nas memórias dos ensacadores e estão refletidos nos padrões raciais que tradicionalmente caracterizaram o cais do porto do Rio de Janeiro. Palavras-chave: pós-abolição; sindicatos; identidade negra.

## ABSTRACT

This article explores whether and how signs of an Afro-Brazilian experience surfaced during the life of SCEC, a trade union of coffee carriers and packers (*carregadores e ensacadores de café*) that flourished in the port of Rio de Janeiro between 1931 and 1964. In spite of the large presence of Afro-descendant workers at SCEC, black legacy was largely absent in the official discourse of the trade union, which gave emphasis instead to class, nationalism and other color-blind values. This fact is not completely disconnected from the socio-political context of Brazil in that epoch, dominated by the system of labor politics (*trabalhismo*) and the ideology of racial democracy. However, I point out that markers of a 'black field' were not completely alien to SCEC. They still survive in the memories of *ensacadores*, and are reflected in the racial patterns that have traditionally characterized the docklands of Rio de Janeiro.

Keywords: post-abolition; trade unions; black identity.

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In March 1945, a reporter from the newspaper *A Manhã* asked dock-worker João Baptista Ribeiro Fragrante his opinion about the labor legislation promoted by Getúlio Vargas. The interviewee declared that: “before Getúlio Vargas, workers were nothing but economic slaves who achieved their ‘Free Birth Law’ (*Lei do Ventre Livre*) in 1930 and their ‘Slavery Abolition Law’ (Golden Law or *Lei Áurea*) ... with the Constitution of 1937!” In this way, Fragrante praised the labor rights that had been granted since the beginning of Vargas’ rule, which started with the Revolution of 1930 and evolved into the authoritarian and corporatist regime of *Estado Novo* (New State) in 1937. Only with the system of protections established by Vargas, Fragrante clarified, would workers achieve “stability, holidays, justice, and a limit of working hours ...”. With the previous legislation, in fact, “the proletariats did not even have the right to a Sunday recess, and enjoyed only some limited cover against work injuries” (“Em 1937...”, *A Manhã*, 1945, p.3). Fragrante was introduced as a member of the Trade Union of Coffee Carriers and Baggers<sup>2</sup> of Rio de Janeiro, *Sindicato dos Carregadores e Ensacadores de Café do Rio de Janeiro* (SCEC), a labor organization that existed between 1931 and 1985 in the port area of Rio de Janeiro.<sup>3</sup> The *ensacadores*, the great majority of whom were Afro-Brazilians, unloaded coffee cargo arriving from the Southeast inland areas, processed and mixed the raw product at the port warehouses, and stored coffee blends in big sacks for shipping and export. These workers were *trabalhadores avulsos* (casual laborers), that is, unskilled men who offered their manual work on a daily basis at the many warehouses on the docklands, without any contract of employment.<sup>4</sup>

The newspaper article added rich information about the interviewee’s background. Fragrante had been born thirty-eight years earlier in the inland state of Minas Gerais. He had arrived in Rio de Janeiro, illiterate, at the age of sixteen, “full of hope and ambitions” (“Em 1937...”, *A Manhã*, 1945, p.3). In 1927, at the age of twenty, he started working as an *ensacador*. In 1931 he was among the founding members of SCEC, of which he later also became secretary and president. Enthusiastic about Vargas’ labor legislation, Fragrante stated that the *Estado Novo* had provided him not only with basic labor rights, but also with the material conditions to study and become an accountant, improving his life prospects (“Em 1937...”, *A Manhã*, 1945, p.3). A black and white photo provides visual information about the interviewee: a very dark-skinned man who is sitting at an office desk, finely dressed in jacket and tie. The speaker’s reference to the Free Birth Law and the Golden Law, I admit,

particularly caught my attention due to Fragante's phenotypic appearance. Sanctioned in 1871, the Free Birth Law established freedom for the offspring of enslaved African and Afro-descendant people, while the Golden Law abolished slavery entirely in 1888. Despite this, Fragante's mention of slavery abolition laws was applied to the apparently color-blind field of labor. The question remains as to whether there is anything racial or 'black' beneath Fragante's testimony. My premise is that any racial reference would be a blatant exception in the framework of SCEC's public discourse. My analysis of the historical archive of this trade union, in fact, shows that *ensacadores* limited their official discourse to concepts of labor and professional unity, the Catholic faith, family, and the nation, with no regard to any black ethno-racial and political references. Nothing at all in the union's archive would suggest that the *ensacadores* were predominantly Afro-Brazilians, aside from the good amount of old photographs that I rescued from SCEC's dusty cupboards.



Figure 1 – João Baptista Ribeiro Fragante in *A Manhã*



Figure 2 – SCEC's dilapidated portrait of Getúlio Vargas

Starting from Fragrante's newspaper interview, this article investigates whether and how a 'black field', or a 'black experience', emerged at SCEC under the veil of much institutional silence.<sup>5</sup> In his study of maroon settlements (*quilombos*) in nineteenth century Rio de Janeiro, Flávio dos Santos Gomes points out the presence of a '*campo negro*' (black field). He presents this concept as a complex and multifaceted social network that was deployed by African and Afro-descendant people, which produced social movements, conflicts and economic practices with different interests (1996, p.36; Cruz, 2000, p.277-278).<sup>6</sup> I propose that, even though the presence of an Afro-Brazilian experience is largely downplayed within SCEC's official documents, a black field still surfaces in multiple ways in the docklands in the mid-twentieth century. Firstly, a black field emerges through the demographic prevalence of black workers in the port of Rio de Janeiro and, even more consistently, within specific trade unions. Secondly, it survives in the memory of *ensacadores*, in some cases openly, and in some other cases filtered through the discourse of class identity. The black field of *ensacadores*, as Gomes (1996) suggests for *quilombos*, was certainly intersected by networks of solidarity and conflict. Having said that, it was also influenced by the set of exclusions that black dockworkers had to face in Brazilian society, and that were reflected in

the docklands somewhat automatically. Seen from this perspective, the presence of a black field in the docklands of Rio de Janeiro is also something that goes beyond the official intentions of SCEC and the reflexivity of its members.

Exploring Afro-Brazilian discourses and silences in the specific context of *ensacadores* must take into account the socio-political situation of the era of labor politics in which SCEC was founded and developed, an era that has been labeled *trabalhismo* (Gomes, 2005). Inaugurated by the regime of Vargas in 1930 and continued under his successors until 1964, *trabalhismo* granted proletariats social advantages without precedent, but also overlapped with a phase of state corporatism (1937-1945) and overall restrictions to social and political actions. In addition, Vargas' regime coincided with official attempts to downplay ethno-racial differences and inequalities. The mainstream discourse became a nationalist ideology of *mestiçagem* (racial mixture) and racial democracy (referred to today as 'myths'), and the promise that industrial development would be the solution for Brazil's social problems. The widespread silence on ethno-racial matters within Brazilian trade unions at the time of the SCEC is reproduced by the paucity of studies that deal with this subject at any stage and at any geographical scale in Brazil (Rogers, 2011, p.124). Only Cruz (2000; 2006a), McPhee (2006a; 2006b), and few other scholars have provided interesting insights on this subject, discussing the 'black' legacy among dockworkers in Rio de Janeiro in the first two decades of the twentieth century. The number of studies that explore racial matters in trade unions drops further in relation to the time of *trabalhismo*. This trend might be due to the assumption that labor organizations, belonging more obviously to the sphere of class, have little to say about ethno-racial questions, and even less at an historical moment when racial democracy was normatively championed as state ideology. The idea of trade unions as exclusively class-based, however, should be reconsidered, particularly for those labor unions in which race and ethnicity have left a significant mark for historical and social reasons (Rogers, 2011). I propose that, in my field of research, even silences represent a source of information, and the underground discourse of these silences can be explored and analyzed (Sheriff, 2001). This reasoning, however, does not suggest that the Afro-Brazilian legacy at SCEC was framed in terms of underground ethno-racial politics. The interest of these laborers, in fact, was to negotiate inclusion and citizenship through the idea of the laborers' proletarian nature, and an apparently color-blind concept of 'respectability'.

This article is partly based on archival sources and engages with the existing literature about race and labor on the docks of Rio de Janeiro. A large portion of the information used was found at SCEC's premises, including minutes (*atas*) of the union's meetings between 1931 and 1964, and 17 issues of SCEC's *mensário*, the monthly journal of the *ensacadores*, released between 1960 and 1961. Other data were discovered in what remains of the record databases of members of SCEC, in addition to photographic material belonging to the organization. These sources were found in haphazard piles at SINTRAMAERJ, the Trade Union of General Carriers of Rio de Janeiro, which replaced SCEC in 1985 and occupies SCEC's premises in the port area of Rio de Janeiro. Aside from these documents, I consulted over one hundred newspaper articles concerning dockworkers' trade unions in Rio de Janeiro via the Online Database (*Hemeroteca*) of Brazil's National Library. Further sources consulted were retrieved from the Public Archives of the State of Rio de Janeiro (Aperj), where the 'Political Police' section holds records of the institutional relations established between trade unions and authorities between 1927 and 1983. This pool of documents represent the basis of what I define as the official (or institutional) discourse of SCEC. They show how the union presented itself to authorities, and reveal the language that the *ensacadores*' leaders deployed in their interactions with the state. The rest of the methodology used for this research was based on interviews, participant observation and oral history collected from elderly former SCEC members, some of whom are still linked to SINTRAMAERJ as pensioners (*aposentados*).

The research was constrained due to the fact that, despite there being a number of surviving SCEC former members available for interview, most of these informants had joined the union towards the end of SCEC's institutional life, with very few having experienced the early decades of the trade union. This means that future attempts to reconstruct members' experiences at SCEC will have to rely on the memory of younger cohorts, some of which are descendants of the trade union's founders.

## RACE AND ETHNICITY IN RIO DE JANEIRO'S DOCKLANDS: AN OVERVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In colonial Rio de Janeiro, enslaved Africans were used to perform the heaviest and most low-status economic activities; among these, the transportation of goods and people. With the intensification of port activities in the

seventeenth century, the Governor of Rio de Janeiro, Rui Vaz Pinto, ruled that "the loading and unloading of ships should be performed by black enslaved people" (Lamarão, 2006, p.22). In the nineteenth century, the moving of the Portuguese royal family to Brazil, the development of the local economy and the boom in coffee exportation required a higher number of manual workers in the docklands. The bags of coffee arriving from the plantations were collected across the city center by "groups of half naked and shouting black men", who carried the product on their heads to the warehouses (Santos in Lamarão, 2006, p.39-40).<sup>7</sup> Farias et al. describe that many slaves-for-hire (*escravos de ganho*) managed to buy their freedom by offering this kind of casual work on the docks, and that the Mina ethnic group from West Africa enjoyed a sort of monopoly in this field (2005, p.111-118). Towards the end of the nineteenth century, due to the waves of European migration in Brazil and the abolition of slavery, a number of (white) migrants started looking for employment as dockworkers in Rio de Janeiro. As a consequence, the number of white workers in the docklands increased notably, even though this sector remained under the control of black workers (Cruz, 2006b, p.227; 2006a, p.225).

In the first decades of the twentieth century, as a result of the industrialization process and the spread of socialist and anarchist ideas from Europe, Brazilian workers started to organize, reacting to their extremely vulnerable working conditions. Dockworkers, for example, had not seen their labor situation much improved since the time of slavery, and continued to be largely oppressed by their employers' contractual power (Batalha, 2006, p.98-99; French, 2006). In 1903 groups of shippers founded the Union of Stevedores (*estivadores*),<sup>8</sup> while in 1905 a group of carriers founded the Society of Resistance of Warehouse and Coffee Workers, historically and popularly known as *Resistência*. A number of scholars have emphasized the strong Afro-Brazilian composition of dockworkers' trade unions (Cruz, 2000; 2006a; Galvão, 1997; Moura, 1995; Chalhoub, 2001), and Moura is quite specific in describing *Resistência* as a 'black' trade union (*um sindicato negro*) (1995, p.71), in spite of the presence of a white minority. Data presented by Cruz of 353 membership photos of *Resistência* members between 1910 and 1929 show, according to her own subjective interpretation, that 23.5 percent of members were *brancos* (white-skinned), 14.2 percent were *pardos* (brown-skinned and/or mixed-race), and 62.3 percent were *pretos* (very dark-skinned) (Cruz, 2000, p.271). For this reason, as Galvão reminds us, the union was also known as the *Companhia dos Pretos* (Black People's Company) (1997, p.22). Roberto Moura (1995) was probably the first scholar to insist on the Afro-Brazilian roots of



the dockworkers' unions of Rio de Janeiro. For example, he pointed out the significant contribution that Afro-Brazilian port workers made to the cultural identity of the city, particularly through samba, capoeira, carnival, and the practice of Afro-Brazilian faiths.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, Cruz has shown that the structure of port carriers' work was based on terminology and organization inherited from slavery, an historical reality that was broadly racialized due to the color and cultural specificities of the enslaved. For example, Cruz refers to the role that a 'captain of the troop' (*capitão da tropa*) played in the coordination of groups (troops or *tropas*) of casual port workers and for the negotiation of labor with potential employers, reproducing an organization typical of the slavery epoch (2010, p.118). Cruz also observes that the expression 'troop of laborers' (*trabalhadores de tropa*), already used during the slavery period, was semantically extended, and continued to be used for trade unionized cargo workers during the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>10</sup>

Roberto Moura (1995, p.71) and Sidney Chalhoub (2001, p.91-114) have interpreted recorded cases of conflicts between European migrants and Afro-Brazilian workers in ethno-racial terms. In fact, the growing number of European competitors between the 1870s and the 1920s seriously threatened the control that Afro-Brazilians exerted in the least prestigious niches of the job market (Cruz, 2006a; Farias et al., 2005, p.127). Cruz (2006a) and MacPhee (2006a, p.647-648), without discarding completely the presence of ethno-racial cleavages in the *Resistência*, have been more skeptical of this reading, while emphasizing the shared lower status of Afro-Brazilian and European laborers and their relatively harmonious cohabitation in port neighborhoods. Cruz's research, in particular, shows that European immigrants were not only accepted as members of dockworkers' unions but they also often occupied important administrative roles in those organizations (2006a, p.206). Cruz, in addition, reminds us that socialist and color-blind ideals were at the basis of the *Resistência*'s statute, approved in 1905, whose motto was "one for all and all for one", promoting the union of all workers without "distinction of nationality, color and religion" (Cruz, 2006a, p.194). Consequently, Cruz and Albuquerque (1983, p.151) believe that conflicts in dockworkers' trade unions in the early twentieth century were more typically due to political rather than ethno-racial reasons. Nonetheless, drawing on Gomes' work (1996), Cruz defends the idea that Afro-Brazilian dockworkers established an underground 'black field' within the ethnically heterogeneous space of port neighborhoods. This social and material space, in Cruz's view, constituted a frame within which a black identity could be preserved and developed (Cruz, 2000, p.277-278).

Expanding upon Cruz's point, it seems that 'black territories' were not based exclusively on links of solidarity but also on the disconnections and discrimination that Afro-Brazilians suffered in a white-hegemonic society. In a newspaper article dating from 1907 and quoted by Cruz, for example, a worker complained that employers barely distinguished laborers from thieves and vagrants, because from the employers' perspective everybody was a "scoundrel and nigger" (*canalha e negrada*). A newspaper article from 1918 also showed a similarly racialized portrait of dockworkers, when a worker from *Resistência* equated the achievements of the union's class struggles to the abolition of slavery, which occurred on 13 May 1888.

Before [*Resistência*], it was common for carriers to be beaten with a multi-tailed whip. There was no appeal (*apelação*) ... they hit the *black* [my italics] ... and the police pretended not to know ... This situation was natural for many, because their sad condition as coffee workers was a prolongation of what May 13 had abolished. (in Cruz 2010, p.117, my translation)

Although the literature on dockworkers I have mentioned refers exclusively to *Resistência* and concerns the pre-Vargas era, these references represent an extremely important background for a study of SCEC's *ensacadores*. Archival material, in fact, shows that SCEC was formed, at least in part, by defectors from *Resistência*, which had traditionally controlled the transportation and storage of any goods, including coffee, in the port area of Rio de Janeiro. The same Frangente with whom I opened this article must have been a member of *Resistência*. In fact, as Frangente himself mentioned in his interview, he had started working as an *ensacador de café* in Rio de Janeiro in 1927, four years before the establishment of SCEC. The minutes of the union's assembly also show that, at least in its initial phase, some SCEC workers kept their membership of *Resistência*, an option that the directive board of *ensacadores* decided to ban in 1932 (*atas* book 1932, p.9). The *atas* book of 1947 (p.71) shows that *Resistência* made repeated use of Labor Justice (*Justiça do Trabalho*) to invalidate the recognition of SCEC and to reincorporate it. Disputes between SCEC and *Resistência* characterized the docklands until the mid-1940s, primarily because *Resistência* could not accept losing control over coffee processing and transportation. Such data illustrate that SCEC and *Resistência* had a very similar constituency. My interpretation of 1249 photos of SCEC members between the 1930s and 1960s reveals that *pretos* and *mulatos*, that is, dark- and brown-skinned people to whom I could subjectively

ascribe some black-African heritage, represented not less than 70 percent of SCEC's total collective.<sup>11</sup>



Figure 3 – Health membership card of an *ensacador*



Figure 4 – An *ensacador* displaying his old work card (*libreta*)

## BEING A ‘RESPECTFUL’ CLASSE: UNITY, CATHOLICISM AND THE NATION IN SCEC’S OFFICIAL DISCOURSE

Cruz suggests that the Afro-Brazilian heritage and constituency of the *Resistência* did not entail an ethno-racial politics of identity within the union. As she notes,

[*Resistência's*] workers were investing precisely in the breaking of racial hierarchies that [Brazilian] society aimed to preserve. They emphasized equality, and championed the irrelevance of color, origin and religion. They created rules of

universal coexistence and praised solidarity. (in Cruz, 2006a, p.208, my translation)

The situation I found at SCEC was very similar. No written archival sources that concern SCEC explicitly reveal the presence of a black legacy in the trade union, and only from the set of historic and administrative photos of the institution can we learn that SCEC was predominantly composed of black workers. The rest of the archival sources I studied, by contrast, make reference to a number of interests and values that clearly occupied a more central space in the institutional identity of *ensacadores*. One of these values was the ideal of professional unity,

to overcome ... individual hate ... which can only bring misfortune to our class ... Two people together are worthier than an individual, because both take advantage of their association ... whereas people who have nobody to support them whenever they fall down will be miserable. (*atas* book 1940, p.19)

The call for unity among members is found consistently in SCEC's assembly *atas* and in the *mensário* between 1931 and 1964. To some extent, this recalls considerations already made by Cruz about *Resistência* in the first two decades of the twentieth century. In the traditional class spirit of labor organizations, SCEC's statute of 1940 aimed to promote class solidarity and work for the wellbeing of members and their families. This included the provision of legal and financial assistance for workers, in addition to creating and supporting literacy courses, schools, and hospitals, and offering support for funerals and other social security needs, in conformity with law 1402/1939 (*atas* book 1940, p.6-7). The objective behind these provisions was to help raise the spiritual and material conditions of workers, who officially self-identified as a *classe* of "low-status laborers" (*trabalhadores humildes*) (*atas* book 1941, p.19). The statute of 1940, on the other hand, also established strict rules in relation to work ethics, against unprofessional conduct and unjustified absence from work (*atas* book, 1940, p.9). From the *atas* books, which include the 1940 statute, we also know that alcohol consumption before and during work was particularly condemned (*atas* book 1947, p.73; *atas* book 1948, p.109). Punishments for misbehavior could range from temporary to permanent exclusion from the trade union (*atas* book 1940, p.9).

A further value that clearly emerges in the official discourse of SCEC is the celebration of *ensacadores'* Catholic faith. On 22 April 1956, the newspaper *A Cruz* dedicated an article to the twenty-fifth anniversary mass of SCEC, held

at the Church of Candelaria: “Following his religious education, the president Waldemiro Nunes could not celebrate the silver anniversary of his institution without addressing his gratitude to God, Who has benefited Brazil’s workers so profoundly” (“O sindicato...”, *A Cruz*, 1956, p.8).

The *mensário* and the photographic material, in the same vein, reveal that the trade union celebrated its foundation anniversary mass, every 20 April in the Church of Santo Antônio dos Pobres (Saint Anthony of the Poor), while other celebrations took place at the Church of São Jorge (Saint George), both in the center of the city. In a document published in the *mensário* in 1961, porters thanked the protection of “merciful Jesus” when the government withdrew an increase in coffee export taxation, which risked reducing the availability of work for *ensacadores* and might have resulted in the union’s bankruptcy (*mensário*, n.6, p.2, 1961).

Even more crucially, an ideal that constantly emerged in the institutional life of SCEC was loyalty to the nation. Most issues of the *mensário*, for example, opened with the following sentence:

WE INVITE OUR COMRADES (*COMPANHEIROS*) TO EMBRACE NOBLE CAMPAIGNS AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE. ONLY IN THIS WAY WILL WE BE ABLE TO PRESENT OURSELVES NOBLY, CONSTITUTING A STRONG AND RESPECTFUL *CLASSE*, AND FULFILLING OUR HIGHEST GOAL OF SERVING THE BRAZILIAN NATION. (*mensário*, 1960 and 1961)

This emphasis on the nation is not surprising for the epoch, particularly considering that, according to its statute, SCEC aimed:

to promote the study, coordination, protection and legal representation of the professional category of coffee baggers ... in order to collaborate with public authorities and other associations to establish professional solidarity and [the] professional category’s *subordination to national interests*. (statute, *atas* book 1940, p.6-7, my italics)

Not by chance, the Ministry of Labor and the Political Police put the trade unions’ meetings, elections, *atas*, and any other official aspects of laborers’ lives under strict surveillance. We know, for example, that the Ministry of Labor often exerted the prerogative of replacing union presidents in cases of internal conflict or suspicions of poor administration.<sup>12</sup> In a worst-case scenario, authorities could dissolve labor organizations in the same way that they had allowed for their creation. In addition, any political activity whose ideals might

be at odds with the government was forbidden within the trade union (*atas* book 1940, p.6-7). As a result, the values of SCEC during *trabalhismo* responded to an institutional and operative need, more than reflecting the *ensacadores'* identity. The union's boards of directors had to constantly reassure the authorities that everything about the conduct and the philosophy of the organization was in line with national ideals. The records of the Political Police of Rio de Janeiro (1940-1964) are full of letters sent by trade-union administrations, in which the leaders of these organizations seemed to be trying reassuring the authorities about their patriotism, anti-communism, institutional unity and adherence to Catholic values. For these reasons, in order to explain the logic of SCEC's official discourse and identity, it is necessary to understand what is meant by 'nation' during *trabalhismo*.

Vargas gained power with the Revolution of 1930, in a moment characterized by strong social demands and agitation, after the First Republic had failed to modernize the country. The spread of socialism among European immigrants, in the meantime, had raised the spirits of the proletariats, who struggled for better labor conditions and whose strikes threatened the continuity of production and the country's wealth. Within this context, Vargas' plan had been to industrialize the country, control Brazil's oligarchical groups, repress anarchist and communist movements, and curb immigration. Vargas' regime addressed these objectives primarily with nationalist policies, regulating social inclusion and labor rights but also increasing state control over the labor sector. Such control became more effective with the *Estado Novo*, when Vargas' government took on a dictatorial and corporatist character. The logic entailed in *trabalhismo* was that workers should receive respect and be protected, but also that they should learn discipline and work ethics in order to be considered 'honest' and to serve the nation (Gomes, 2005, p.239). The government saw the lower classes as soldiers of industrialization and used a logic of social politics that was largely inspired by Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum Encyclical*, which established the rights and duties of capital and labor, and where the concepts of religious observance and family were emphatically stated. The idea, as Gomes suggests, was that "if it was not possible to erase poverty completely, at least it was possible to provide the proletariats with a more human and Christian condition, as requested by the social doctrine of the [Catholic] Church..." (2005, p.198).

In terms of race relations, Vargas is remembered for his nationalist support for the ideology of 'racial democracy' and 'racial mixture'. These national values discursively downplayed the existence of racial inequalities in Brazil so to foster

national identity and pride, but also ended up disguising racial divides and championing a romantic view of Brazil's racial 'harmony' (Hasenbalg, 1979). By the end of the nineteenth century, eugenic views had started to become popular in Brazil. This suggests a general pessimism at that time about the presence of a large Afro-descendant population and the idea that this could be problematic for Brazilian development. Reacting to such views, Vargas drew on Gilberto Freyre's positive assessment of Brazil's multiple racial and cultural roots as a feature of which Brazilians must be proud. At the same time as Vargas de-penalized Afro-Brazilian religions and valued Afro-Brazilian culture as part of national folklore, his regime constantly celebrated Brazilians as citizens of a mixed-race and culturally syncretic country. In so doing, the regime praised Brazil's racial harmony and looked with skepticism at any politics that might contradict this idea. In 1937, within the framework of corporatism that banned all political and social organizations, Vargas dismantled Frente Negra Brasileira (FNB),<sup>13</sup> the first expression of black politics that had achieved formal organization in Brazil. This happened just after FNB had reached the status of a political party in 1936. It also happened at the time when FNB had begun to proselytize among trade unions.<sup>14</sup> This means that, although *trabalhismo* was characterized by moments of democratic opening and contextual re-articulation of black political action, the overall context did not encourage the development of a political black identity within dockworkers' trade unions in Rio de Janeiro.

As the philosophy of racial democracy was ubiquitous to all aspects of social life in Brazil, it was also enmeshed within Brazil's labor politics. Vargas acknowledged that black workers should be given official attention as a consequence of their suffering under slavery (Castro Gomes, 2005, p.223). Some authors have particularly explored the racial layers of *trabalhismo*, interpreting Vargas' labor politics for the lower classes as an attempt to redress the popular and black-racialized imagery of the *malandro* (trickster). The *malandro*, as often represented in samba lyrics, was widely portrayed as an antithesis to work ethics because of its association with bohemian life, petty crime and rejection of work (Matos, 1932; Lima, 2009). Vargas' labor politics, in other words, would have the function of domesticating Afro-Brazilian tricksters and transforming them into "tie-wearing workers of capital" (*homens de gravata e capital*) (Lima, 2009, p.27) in the service of national progress. It is worth remembering that the *Estado Novo* supported the diffusion of a pedagogic samba (laborers' samba or samba *do trabalhador*) that praised the values of work and encouraged the social redemption of the *malandros* from "idle" subjects into "new men" (*homens novos*) (Maia, 2011, p.212; Matos, 1982, p.108).

If trade unions were controlled by the state and relied on state support for social advantages and recognition, national ideals of 'respectability' must have been crucial for dockworkers. In other words, incorporating the logic of racial democracy and reproducing silences about race was also part of the game, and might have reinforced the paucity of ethno-racial references in SCEC's official documents. Having said this, there is no doubt that submission to the state was convenient for dockworkers, who gained not only 'respectability' but also economic prosperity during *trabalhismo*. In 1960, SCEC's *mensário* was still celebrating that Vargas had allowed "[all] workers to occupy a prestigious place in the economic, legal and political scenario [of Brazil]" (*mensário*, n.2, p.2, 1960). Due to the favorable conditions that Vargas provided for the coffee sector, *ensacadores* were able to purchase their own headquarters (*sede própria*) with an annexed clinic, gather "a financial patrimony of 30,000,000 Brazilian *cruzeiros*" and buy a number of estate properties. They were also able to guarantee broad social security and adequate medical services for union members and their families (*mensário*, n.2, p.2, 1960). SCEC's photographic archive and newspaper articles offer visual evidence of this prosperous past, showing institutional moments of the trade union's life; for example, expensive ceremonies and parties attended by personalities such as Brazil's president Eurico Gaspar Dutra, the Governor of the State of Guanabara Carlos Lacerda, and Deputy Tenório Cavalcanti. It was during these celebrations that finely dressed *ensacadores* displayed much of their wealth and 'respectability' to state authorities. Living proof of this success was João Fragante, the formerly illiterate *ensacador* who had 'respectably' turned into an accountant, while honestly earning a living through his hard job (*a rude tarefa*) on the docks ("Em 1937...", *A Manhã*, 1945, p.3). Sitting at his desk and dressed in an elegant suit, this slave descendant was interviewed by a popular newspaper, displaying all the signs of his novel social status.



Figure 5 – A moment in SCEC's administrative life (1960)





Figure 6 – The Board of Directors at ‘St. Anthony of the Poor’ Church (1960)



Figure 7 – Ensacadores’ families welcoming Deputy Tenório Cavalcanti at SCEC (1960)



Figure 8 – Party celebrations with members’ families at SCEC (1960)

## RACE, MEMORY OF SLAVERY AND AFRO-BRAZILIAN LEGACY AMONG DOCKWORKERS

The previous section of this article focused on the official discourse of SCEC, as contained in the institutional documents that cast light on the trade union's past. The question, at this point, is whether any 'black' experience had significance beyond SCEC's institutional language. The only way to explore this question, unfortunately, is to rely on the testimonies of the few living veterans of the labor organization. One of the matters that I explored with my informants was whether racial discrimination held any significance at SCEC.

[There was] nothing of that! The only thing that mattered for us was supporting the interests of the *classe* ... ensuring respect from all workers and being well-behaved at work (*portarmos bem no trabalho*) ... White, black, *mulato* (white and black mixed) ... once you carried coffee, it did not matter who you were outside the docks (*a sua pessoa não contava mais*) ... you were just a bagger (*you were saqueiro e ponto*)! Everybody did the same, just a very rough job (*trabalho pesado pa' cacete*) ... and we had to help each other to make the weight more bearable ... White people were a minority anyway...they had to adapt, didn't they? (Arlindo)

The interview with Arlindo, a ninety-year-old former *ensacador*, is quite typical of the interviews I carried out with other SCEC workers, independent of their color. All the interviewees pointed out the prevalence of Afro-Brazilian workers at SCEC as well as the presence of a white minority with whom, apparently, there was no racial conflict. The heavy pace of the job and its low social status, in addition to its collaborative nature, must have converted SCEC's labor collective into a space of relative social harmony, free from ethno-racial tensions (Cruz, 2006a).

Although these testimonies downplayed ethno-racial conflict among *ensacadores*, race should still be explored as an analytical concept in the study of dockworkers' trade unions. Firstly, as Arlindo observes, white people were a minority at SCEC and white people might have had to 'adapt', making concessions to a predominantly non-white collective. In other words, racial issues among *ensacadores* might have been different if there had been a different racial distribution in the workforce, or if white people had dominated the boards of directors. This last possibility, however, was notably reduced by SCEC's statute (*atas* book 1940, p.6), according to which presidents should be

born in Brazil and members of the boards of directors should be Brazilian or naturalized Brazilian (*atas* book 1940, p.9).

Secondly, although internal relations between *ensacadores* were not clearly influenced by color and racial issues, this fact should not imply that workers considered racism as something alien to their everyday lives. Most black interviewees, for example, told of the racial discrimination they had suffered away from the docks. These cases included experiences of being banned from elevators and swimming pools in middle-class buildings, being the only people searched by the police on public transport, and being mistaken for muggers on their way home. Although informants had a view of the docklands as a non-racist space, this fact did not spare most *ensacadores* from having a black-racialized experience in Rio de Janeiro. This occurred even during the ideological era dominated by *trabalhismo* and racial democracy, when the days of racism seemed numbered (Bastide; Fernandes, 1971).

Thirdly, even assuming that *ensacadores* experienced the docklands as a racially democratic place, this fact does not necessarily imply that dockworkers' trade unions were non-racialized. In fact, the high presence of Afro-Brazilians in some unions was not simply an effect of the triumphal resistance of black workers in defending their jobs from migrants. It was also a result of a general process of segregation, which disproportionally confined Afro-Brazilians to heavy and unskilled activities, even in the docklands. The book *Um Porto para o Rio* (A Port for Rio) (Turazzi, 2012), which illustrates images of the construction of the port in the early twentieth century, reveals that the laborers involved in the activities of landfilling the port and expanding the docks between 1903 and 1910 were predominantly white. Similarly, interviews with dockworkers have revealed that the numbers of black workers were traditionally lower in the Stevedores' Union, and even lower among the *Conferentes* (shipment clerks). Data relating to this point can also be visually collected from the book *Estivadores do Rio de Janeiro* (Almeida, 2003). Almeida displays the photos of 66 union presidents, from which I deduced that 50 percent of the *Estivadore* presidents were white. The fact of their being a larger proportion of white dockworkers among *estivadores* (whose work was performed inside the ships' holds) than among *Resistência's* workers and coffee *ensacadores* (whose jobs were performed outside the ships) is also observed, but not explained, by Moura (1995, p.71). My informants from the docklands generally ascribe this situation to the higher clustering of Portuguese and, more marginally, Italian and Spanish dockworkers among *estivadores* and shipment clerks.<sup>15</sup> But why should white Europeans cluster more typically in certain jobs

and trade unions in the docks? To answer this question, it is important to look at racial distribution patterns not simply as something typical of the docklands, but as an entrenched dynamic of Brazil's social and economic life in general.

Andrews (2004, p.143-144) defends the idea that links of solidarity based on nationality and color might have influenced the choice of the employers – most of them white and foreign.<sup>16</sup> Specifically, the work of landfilling and expanding the port of Rio de Janeiro in the early twentieth century was sub-contracted to a private British company, C.H. Walker & Cia Ltda (Turazzi, 2012), which had total control of the recruitment process. According to Domingues (2003, p.103), the preference among employers for (white) European workers was based on the clear tendency to identify these workers as more skilled and familiar with tasks involving some level of technology.<sup>17</sup> However, Domingues argues that the idea of European immigrants having better skills than Brazilians was a myth (2003, p.91-92). In a similar vein, Galvão (1997), who explores literacy rates among *Resistência's* workers in the first decades of the twentieth century, finds that 26 percent of European members were declared illiterate, compared to 13 percent of Brazilian *pretos*, 13 percent of Brazilian *pardos*, and 9 percent of Brazilian *brancos*. As a consequence of this paradox, Domingues (2003, p.121) concludes that the comparative advantages of European migrants in the job market should primarily be explained by the persistence of eugenic and whitening ideals in Brazil.

Since the scholarship available on dockworkers in Rio de Janeiro has not followed a comparative approach, what we lack is a reflection on pay and prestige hierarchies among different trade unions operating in the docklands. In this sense, the interview process with dockworkers highlighted that the tasks carried out by the shipment clerks' and the *estivadores'* collectives (where the number of Afro-Brazilians was lower) enjoyed higher prestige and remuneration than those performed by *Resistência's* and SCEC's workers, whose labor was considerably heavier and involved more physical power.<sup>18</sup> Interviewees explained that the work of *estivadores* was made lighter by the use of mechanical cranes (*guindastes*), while the job of shipment clerks consisted of monitoring and administrative activities, a fact that required some literacy and mathematical skills. That said, higher pay and the type of work were not the only factors that produced uneven racial distributions among dockworkers' unions. In fact, both SCEC's statute and interviews with informants revealed that admission procedures for members traditionally favored the employment of workers' relatives, and that potential candidates were often proposed from within circles of friends and acquaintances. Some levels of uneven racial

distribution, consequently, were probably maintained through the embedded racialization of workers' social networks (among family, friends and neighbors), where specific ethno-racial groups might have been predominant. A parallel discourse can be made in relation to the social mobility of workers depending on their color. Galvão's informants at *Resistência*, for example, claimed that while several Portuguese people had been union members, they tended to resign more easily as soon as better job opportunities opened up (1997, p.49); opportunities that, for one reason or another, seemed less available to black workers or less appealing to them.

These considerations are useful to relativize my informants' understandings of the docklands as a space where race did not really matter. Feelings about racial divides were probably reduced not only because some mixture was present in all the trade unions, but also because, in the case of work surpluses, laborers might be offered informal day labor through other unions. These exchanges, according to informants, were particularly frequent between *ensacadores*, *Resistência*'s carriers and *estivadores*, where workers could even 'rent out' their shifts to other people in exchange for a commission.<sup>19</sup> Finally, racial divides within and between different trade unions were largely mystified as a result of the shared social and cultural space in the docklands. In fact, as an informant stated, "dockworkers played the same sambas, drank in the same *botiquins* (canteens), went to the same brothels, took the same train back to the suburbs [where most dockworkers lived]..." (Ivanil).

The black racialization of some trade unions took on sharper contours when I asked SCEC informants why black laborers had traditionally prevailed in their unions. Interviewees responded by saying that coffee transportation was, originally, typically the work of enslaved people (*isso vem do trabalho escravo*). Others explained that it was because they executed manual labor (*trabalho braçal*), which required little or no schooling (*baixa escolaridade*). Informants made their points by implying a discourse of the racialization of poverty, the main explanation for which was embedded in the memory of slavery. This is the case not only because the slave trade exerted a racializing effect on Brazilian history, but also because, in the understandings of *ensacadores*, a black-racialized body represented the 'ideal' executor for heavy, physical jobs:

It might happen that a muscled white man was willing to work [as an *ensacador*] ... well, the man could not even unload a truck of 150 sacks! [laughs] If he could barely take the sacks out of the truck, how could he ever transport them to the

warehouse? These [white] people did not even know how to hold the bag ... so their hands turned very soon into raw flesh. In contrast, the *pretos* ... the *preto* was very strong (*era forte mesmo*) ... which is not a surprise since he came from slavery ... When he started working [as an *ensacador*], the black man already knew the job ... because he came from the plantations, from inland in the state [of Rio de Janeiro] or from [the states of] Minas Gerais and Espírito Santo. They all descended from slaves who lived on the plantations there. When he [the black worker] was lazy, not even the whip worked (*nem dava o chicote pra isso*) ... but when he was keen on working, in that case he was an excellent laborer. (Arlindo)

Another worker reinforced similar connections between the heavy jobs of *ensacadores* and the black-racializing effects of slavery:

In my time, coffee baggers earned good money since pay was proportional to production ... but the job ... the job really killed you! [We] black folks (*a negrada*)<sup>20</sup> had to unload trucks (*carretas*) of 200 or more sacks of coffee, 60 kilos each ... 61, if you included the weight of the sack ... Most workers were black because it was the job of the slaves! Because, in the end, what do we [goods carriers] do if not give continuity to what the black slave (*o negro escravo*) did before us? (Levy)

The presence of a 'black field' within dockworkers' trade unions does not surface exclusively through the process of color distribution and the performance of black-racialized bodies as a legacy of slavery. Roberto Moura (1995), not by chance, has emphatically described dockworkers' contributions to the shaping of Afro-Brazilian culture in Rio de Janeiro through samba, carnival and their involvement in Afro-Brazilian faiths, as has also been mentioned by the same dockworkers (see also Arantes, 2005). Members of the *Resistência* and other dockworkers' organizations in Rio de Janeiro (including SCEC), for example, were founders of the samba school *Império Serrano*, one that traditionally put some emphasis on the memory of slavery and Afro-Brazilian cultural heritage such as *jongo* music, Afro-Brazilian popular Catholicism and African gods (*orixás*).<sup>21</sup> In spite of this legacy, any connections between *ensacadores* and samba, capoeira, and carnival are strangely silenced in SCEC's archives, and were carefully maintained outside of the union's official life.

In official discourse, *ensacadores* had also preferred to conceal any references to Afro-Brazilian faiths, while they emphasized their lives as observant Catholics. The data that I collected through archival research, however, show incoherence with a statement that I constantly heard in the port area of Rio de Janeiro: "dockworkers were all *macumbeiros*!" (followers of *macumba*, a term

widely used to refer to Afro-religious cults of *candomblé* and *umbanda* in Rio de Janeiro). Ivanil and other *ensacadores* spent some time remembering which *candomblé* and *umbanda* houses (*casas de macumba*) SCEC leaders frequented in the areas of Jacarezinho, Nova Iguaçu, Penha and Duque de Caxias. Some of them also mentioned how *macumba* played an important role during the election process of SCEC boards of directors, where opposite factions of *ensacadores* competed politically for power. These rituals, I was told, never took place at SCEC's headquarters and remained confined to the semi-private space of its members' lives. The manifestation of African spirits, on the other hand, was not totally separate from life in the docklands.

Kiko: ...When the crane started lifting a cargo of stones into the ship, a worker went completely crazy. He screamed and panicked. He shouted out that those stones could not leave [the docks]...they should be put back where they came from [the land from where they had been extracted]. You had to see it to believe it...

Me: But what happened?

Kiko: He was possessed [by an *orixá*] (*sei lá, o cara baixou alguma coisa*)...

Other worker: It's because *orixás* (*as entidades*) relate to earth, water, fire ... That one must have felt deprived of his element (*sentiu que tiraram alguma coisa dele*).

Me: How did the story end?

Kiko: He calmed down only when somebody called his mother, who had a *terreiro* (*candomblé/umbanda* house) somewhere...

But is it possible that nothing of the *ensacadores'* *macumba* universe was present at SCEC's premises? Interestingly, when I asked dockworkers whether any visible expression of an Afro-Brazilian religious universe had survived at the SCEC, Ivanil looked at me with some surprise: "Is there not a Saint George over there [pointing to the Saint George altar and statue on the third floor of SINTRAMAERJ's headquarters]? Isn't that black people's stuff? (*Não tem um São Jorge lá em cima? Aquilo não é coisa de preto?*)".

Ivanil's reference to the Saint George altar as "black people's stuff" exemplifies the syncretic process by which enslaved people and their descendants have used images of white saints and rituals from Catholicism to venerate African gods (Saint Jorge is largely identified with African god Ogum in Rio de Janeiro). Whether this cultural syncretism is the result of the harsh repression that Afro-derived cults have suffered since colonial times, or whether it represents a 'black' cultural appropriation of Catholicism, or



Figure 9 – Saint George's niche at SCEC's/SINTRAMAERJ's headquarters

more simply Afro-Catholicism, this subject is widely explored in literature (Karasch, 2000, p.355-360; Soares, 2002) and goes far beyond the reach of this article. A point that is quite important to stress here, instead, is that Vargas formally removed the embargo against Afro-Brazilian faiths (law 1202/1939), basically admitting them as ingredients of national identity. In this context, nothing should have prevented *ensacadores* from making their devotion to *orixás* more explicit within SCEC's spaces. It is worth mentioning, however, that such ritual freedom was not unconditional, and followers still had to obtain expensive permits to practice their cults from the Delegacy of Games and Costumes, at least until 1976. In addition, the granting of these permits was never automatic, and Afro-Brazilian faiths continued to face repression more or less implicitly. Both during and after Vargas' rule, in fact, Afro-Brazilian cultural expressions were generally seen as antithetical to modernization and public morality, or as popular folklore. Consequently, an open display of Afro-Brazilian culture might have been counterproductive for the 'respectable' image that *ensacadores* aimed to project of themselves either as citizens or as state interlocutors. This trend certainly continued during the military regime (1964-1975), when, despite the end of *trabalhismo*, the ideology of racial democracy continued to thrive.



## CONCLUSION: DOCKWORKERS' POST-ABOLITION FIELDS BETWEEN CITIZENSHIP AND EXCLUSION

The absence of Afro-Brazilian markers in SCEC's institutional discourse and its general confinement to the semi-private sphere of workers' lives does not simply reflect the irrelevance of ethno-racial matters in the docklands. It should also be interpreted either as a result of constraints set by the state ideology of racial democracy or as a strategy of social emancipation of black proletariats. This strategy made particular sense at a time when state ideologies claimed to be offering a valid solution for the full integration of the black masses into the formal job market, while Afro-descendants were trying to shake off the stigma of slavery. SCEC's wealth and its illustrious relationships with authorities and politicians suggest that the dream of racial equality was affordable for *ensacadores*, and that displaying loyalty to the mainstream moral system of the nation was both compulsory and convenient. For all these reasons, SCEC's official archive may not be the most appropriate field in which to research black experiences among coffee baggers. The archive, as I have suggested, represents a better space to explore how *ensacadores* concealed and negotiated their Afro-Brazilian heritage, in order to build and preserve an image of respectability. Seen from this angle, *ensacadores'* silence on Afro-Brazilian heritage might represent "simultaneously a public form of accommodation and a private (if at the same time communal) form of resistance" (Sheriff, 2001, p.83).

Having noted the set of institutional constraints and conscious choices that might have led *ensacadores* to officially downplay the Afro-Brazilian legacy, I have posited that the presence of a black field, or several black fields, at SCEC still surfaces through the intersection of different scenarios. The first scenario consists of the way that racial structures manifest in the docklands, although this might sound at odds with the feeling of racial harmony that some informants report having experienced there. However, the idea of a black field does not simply build onto the systems of inclusion and solidarity that Afro-Brazilian workers deployed within and outside the docklands. It also draws on processes of historical exclusion, which have generally prevented certain sectors of post-abolition society from full access to socio-economic resources, and have relegated them to lower-status jobs. The second scenario by which a black field emerges among dockworkers concerns the explicit reference that these workers make to the slavery past as an important framework for their jobs. I have observed that this legacy, which is already described in the

historiography, also tends to 'speak' through the black-racialized body of the *ensacador*, stigmatized and self-stigmatized as a 'natural' performer of heavy, unskilled labor. The third scenario that reveals a black field relies on links with Afro-Brazilian cultural heritage, in the ways that this has been preserved within the less official spheres of SCEC workers' lives.

At the institutional level, dockworkers' links with slavery history and Afro-Brazilian legacy emerged in Fragrante's newspaper interview, although any possible ethno-racial content there appears somewhat ambiguous and is reframed in class terms. Fragrante, as I have pointed out, de-racialized his testimony by arguing that Vargas' labor legislation had abolished *workers'* slavery.<sup>22</sup> However, a number of features tend to racialize his testimony. Firstly, the interviewee made an extremely accurate reference to slavery mitigation and abolition laws (the Free of Birth Law and the Golden Law), something that white workers might not have cited with the same emphasis. Secondly, some ethno-racial content in the newspaper article was automatically displayed by the phenotype of the interviewee, independent of his elegant outfit and further evidence of his improved social status. Finally, Afro-Brazilian legacy emerges through the ethno-racial constituency of the overall labor collective that Fragrante represented: a constituency whose prevalent Afro-Brazilian character was presumably known to *A Manhã's* readership in 1945. In general, the impression is that scars from a rather close and familiar slave past, as well as echoes of post-abolition struggles, still filter through Fragrante's discourse, where class and race necessarily appear as superposed and entangled spheres. Fragrante, consequently, was more than just a lower-class worker who showed his gratitude to *trabalhismo*. He was also a voice of post-abolition society. This could be understood as an historical ground crossed by discourses, negotiated meanings and silences, through which black proletariats have strategically looked for citizenship and longed for effective inclusion.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The work leading to this article has received funding from the People Program (Marie Curie Actions) of the European Union's Seventh Framework Program (FP7/2007–2013) under REA grant agreement no. PIOF-GA-2012-327465.

<sup>2</sup> I could not find a better translation of *ensacador* into the English language. This term in Portuguese refers to workers who stored food and other goods into bags/sacks for distribution on the market.

<sup>3</sup> *Sindicato dos Carregadores e Ensacadores de Café do Rio de Janeiro*. In the text, I simplify the original 'SCECRJ' into 'SCEC'. The trade union changed its name to *Sindicato dos Carregadores e Ensacadores de Café da Guanabara* in 1960, when the federal capital was transferred to Brasília and Rio de Janeiro became the capital of the small state of Guanabara (1960-1975). It finally changed into the *Sindicato dos Carregadores e Ensacadores de Café do Estado do Rio de Janeiro* in 1975.

<sup>4</sup> Although coffee carrying was an important task of coffee dockworkers, SCEC workers used the term *ensacador/es* more often than *carregador/es*.

<sup>5</sup> For similar considerations about silence on ethno-racial matters in official discourse see McPhee (2006b, 175) and Cruz (2006a).

<sup>6</sup> Cruz, before me, found the concept of a 'black field' useful to analyze black ethno-racial legacy in Rio de Janeiro's docklands in the first two decades of the twentieth century.

<sup>7</sup> Cruz, citing a document of 1853, mentions that, before abolition, most of the transportation of coffee between warehouses was done by black slaves-for-hire, who walked in a queue (*enfileirados*) and were directed by a captain (2010, p.118). See also Farias et al. (2005, p.115).

<sup>8</sup> Although this term is often used generically for dockworkers, the specialty of the *estivadores* was organizing cargos inside the ship's hold.

<sup>9</sup> See also Libano (1994) and Arantes (2005, p.107-127).

<sup>10</sup> An article on the first page of the newspaper *A Noite* ("Matou...", 1931, p.1) comments on the murder of a *capitão da tropa* at SCEC. The work of the captain was carried out by the trade union '*fiscal*' (superintendent), terminology still used today, while the *tropas* were transformed into professional categories of workers (*classes* or *proletariado*).

<sup>11</sup> This percentage does not suggest that the rest of the workers were 'white'. The remaining 30 percent includes a small percentage of non-white workers about whose black-African ancestry I felt unsure. There is no information about the year in which the membership forms were filled out. However, the date of workers' admission in the trade union appears in some of the forms, ranging from 1931 to the early 1960s.

<sup>12</sup> For an example, see the *atas* book 1941, p.18-19.

<sup>13</sup> Brazilian Black Front.

<sup>14</sup> During Italian military campaigns in Abyssinia, FNB exhorted "black stevedores of Rio de Janeiro, Santos and Bahia to boycott the export of any war resources that could be employed against their threatened [black] brothers" (*A Manhã*, 1935, p.7).

<sup>15</sup> This impact of 'nationality', I observe, had the implicit effect of altering the 'racial' distribution in certain labor unions or job sectors. However, with the implementation of immigration restriction laws in the early 1930s, this impact probably tended to decrease.

<sup>16</sup> In Sao Paulo, according to Domingues (2003, p.118), 75 percent of employers were Italian.

<sup>17</sup> For a similar point away from the docklands see Terra (2012). The author explains how since the mid-nineteenth century, European immigrants tended to monopolize mechanized transport of people, while enslaved people and freemen remained disproportionately segregated in physical jobs of general transportation as *carregadores*.

<sup>18</sup> See also Andrews (2004, p.143-144).

<sup>19</sup> This system was called '*cavalo*' (literally, horse).

<sup>20</sup> The frequent use of this term among *ensacadores* is interesting, conserving the presence of about 20-25 percent of white people among this labor category.

<sup>21</sup> For a sample of lyrics by *Resistência* and Império Serrano's leader, Aniceto da Império, see <http://letras.mus.br/aniceto-do-imperio/> (last accessed 17 Oct. 2014).

<sup>22</sup> This testimony finds a parallel in relatively recent interviews carried out with slave descendants in Brazil's rural Southeast (see Gomes; Mattos, 1998, p.7-12; and Rios; Mattos, 2005, p.248). These interviews show that slave descendants ascribe *real* abolition to Getúlio Vargas, meaning that the law of 1888 had not done enough to convert enslaved and slave-descendant people into full citizens.

**Erratum** - Fields of Post-Abolition: Labor and ‘black’ experience among coffee workers in Rio de Janeiro (1931-1964)

No artigo “Fields of Post-Abolition: Labor and ‘black’ experience among coffee workers in Rio de Janeiro (1931-1964)” publicado no periódico *Revista Brasileira de História*, vol. 35, n. 69, edição em inglês, na p. 27 do artigo, onde se lia:

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leia-se:

“1. The research leading to these results has received funding from the People Programme (Marie Curie Actions) of the European Union Seventh Framework Programme (FP7/2007-2013) under grant agreement n° PIOF-2012-327465. It is made clear that the work presented reflects only the author’s views and the European Union is not liable for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.”